

STATE OF THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-3, 5-10 and 12 were pending in the application. Claims 1, 5-7, and 9-10 were amended above, and Claim 12 was deleted.

REMARKS

At the outset, Applicant would like to thank the Examiner for the time taken and courtesies extended in the telephonic interview of June 25, 2003. In the interview, the text of the claims was discussed, including the necessity for specific limitations within the claims drawn to the embodiments argued in the Office Action Response sent on February 26, 2003. Additionally, the relationship between the proposed, more specific language and the cited art was also discussed, wherein the Examiner agreed that the more specific language included in Claim 1 above did in fact define over the cited art. Applicant therefore prepared this Amendment After Final in order to prompt an Advisory Action from the Examiner, and to place the present application in condition for allowance.

In the last Office Action mailed April 29, 2003, the Examiner first objected to the drawings, then rejected Claims 5-7, 10 and 12 under 35 U.S.C. §112, and rejected Claims 1-3, and 7-10 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S Patent No. 6,298,626, issued to Rudden (Rudden '626) in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,771,271, issued to Keel (Keel '626). Applicant continues to traverse the Examiner's rejections. In response, however, Applicant has deleted Claim 12 to address the Examiner's drawing objection, amended Claims 5-7 and 9-10 to amend the informalities therein, and amended Claim 1 to better define the claimed invention. These amendments should therefore place the present application in condition for allowance.

Claim 1, as amended above, clearly and specifically claims structure that defines over the prior art cited by the Examiner. Specifically, Claim 1 includes the limitations of both former

Claims 4 and 11, including the limitation that catch recess (72, 74, 76) comprises a plurality of connecting positions, as shown in Figs. 2-3 of the application. By including a plurality of connecting positions, the covering arrangement claimed and described in the present application can be used with a variety of roof lengths, without the need cut/alter the length of the covering parts.

The invention as claimed in Claim 1 is not taught, disclosed or even suggested by any of the prior art cited by the Examiner. Rudden '626 discloses a sliding panel for use in an exterior wall covering, which has a male-to-female engagement system for interconnection to other panels. Rudden '626, however, does not contemplate the variable-connection system claimed in Claim 1, where the relative positions of neighboring covering parts can be varied by using one of the plurality of connecting positions for the connecting recesses. In fact, Rudden '626 does not even suggest such a connection system, as the male-to-female system disclosed therein would be incompatible with such an idea.

Keel '271 fails to remedy this deficiency. Keel '271 discloses a clapboard assembly that is joined together using epoxy and sealant. The clapboards only include a single attachment point, and therefore do not contemplate the ability to vary the relative positions of the clapboards at all.

Based on the above, Applicant submits that Claim 1, as amended, clearly and specifically recites a covering arrangement that is not taught, disclosed or suggested by any of the references cited by the Examiner, either alone or in combination with any other prior art. Further, the remaining claims in the application, namely Claims 2-3, and 5-10, should also be in condition for allowance, as they all depend from Claim 1.

In addition to the above, Applicant submits that by entering the above amendments, the Examiner would solely be required to undertake a cursory review of the issues in this case. The above amendment to Claim 1 comprises language that was originally included in Claim 11, but which was inadvertently and without intention omitted from Claim 1. Further, Applicant's comments in the Response sent on February 26, 2003, were entirely directed towards the now-claimed embodiment, and therefore the differences between the present invention and the cited art have already been considered by the Examiner. The above comments are merely a rehash of Applicant's previous arguments in the response of February 26, 2003.

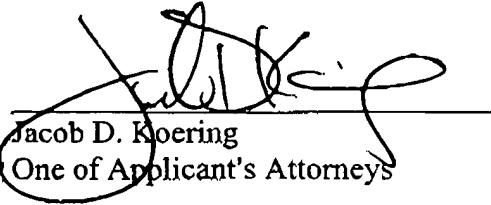
Additionally, Applicant submits that any issues raised by the presently proposed amendments were already covered in the Examiner's original search. The original search was directed towards, *inter alia*, connection systems for interlocking panel systems. The above amendments merely clarify the specifics of the present connection system, but do not change the basic structure of the device at all. The presently claimed covering parts have always included a connection system, as all similar art does. Thus, any and all art that could have been uncovered by the Examiner relative to specific connection systems has already been uncovered, and the proposed amendments therefore do not comprise new matter or new issues that would require further consideration and/or searches.

Based on the above, Applicant respectfully requests entry of the above amendments, and passage of the present application to allowance.

Should anything further be required, a telephone call to the undersigned at (312) 226-1818 is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

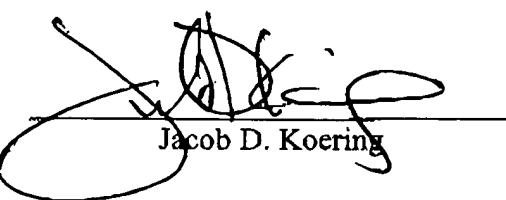
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Jacob D. Koering
One of Applicant's Attorneys

Dated: June 25, 2003

CERTIFICATE OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being faxed to Examiner Kevin McDermott of The United States Patent and Trademark Office, Art Unit 3635 at 703-308-3519 on June 25, 2003.


Jacob D. Koering